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Dr. Eamon Duffy: If you're feeling bad, it's only going to get worse. You can hydrate, slow down, and feel better that way, but it's not going to feel better just by continuing at this same pace because your body is telling you, "Hey, I can't tolerate this for long periods of time."

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Becs Gentry: Welcome to Set the Pace, the official New York Road Runners podcast presented by Peloton. I am one of your hosts, Becs Gentry, and our wonderful host and CEO of New York Road Runners, Rob Simmelkjaer, will be joining us for the conversation today. I'm kicking us off here as we are here to talk about the weather. And being English, we love it. We love talking about the weather.

But particularly right now, the summer heat that we are experiencing here in New York and I think for the vast majority of the East Coast, a lot of us heading out for our runs as early as physically possible with our personal schedules to get the miles in before the outdoor air is just unbearable. It is literally historically hot here, a heat dome parked over the eastern half of the country right through the 4th of July.

Here in Manhattan, Central Park hit 100 degrees. Newark touched 104. And Philadelphia ran three straight days over 101 degrees. It has been steamy. And I can tell you from personal experience, it did feel like I was running on the face of the sun where I was running for most of those days. I was worried the foam in my trainers was going to melt. It was unreal.

I have never sweated so much. I have never made that many adaptations to my pace. I have really, really learned to ignore my wearable devices on days like we've had recently and just go out there with my own brain leading the way, listening to my body. All things that we are going to have fantastic conversations with three great people who have a lot of personal and shared experience in this.

Many of our runners and the reason why we're doing it is because the hardest training of the year is literally going to be happening in these worst conditions. We always think of winter being the worst conditions for those spring marathons because you potentially have to run through snow and ice and just really cold, miserable temperatures in short, dark days. But it's flipping on its head because now these hot, humid temperatures are almost beating those cold winter days.

We've got Sydney Marathon on August the 30th, Berlin on September the 27th, and Chicago on October 11th. And then we have the TCS New York City Marathon coming in on November 1st, and that is not in a safe zone. It could still be a

very warm day. So every one of you runners choosing those start lines is getting yourself to those start lines, building yourselves up through this incredible heat and intensity.

So whether you are chasing one of those full marathons or you are just somebody who loves running, you still get it. You still are trying to get yourself out of the door to beat the heat before it overwhelms you and potentially sidelines you for the rest of your day because we all know that can happen.

It definitely can be a season that will make you stronger and faster, but there are ways to do it sensibly and that's what we're here to talk about today. We are going to discuss how every runner can turn the heat from this brutal summer into a potential secret weapon. So stay tuned.

00:03:45

Speaker 3: History takes the track this summer in New York City. Join us for the USATF Outdoor and Para National Championships, July 23rd to 26th at Icahn Stadium in New York City as the sport celebrates 150 years of outdoor championships. Watch America's best athletes compete for national titles and records at one of track and field's most iconic venues. Secure your tickets today at [usatf.org/tickets](https://usatf.org/tickets). Again, that's [usatf.org/tickets](https://usatf.org/tickets).

00:04:09

Rob Simmelkjaer: Beccs, of course I follow you on Instagram so I know you've been out there all summer putting in some serious work in brutal conditions a lot more than I have, so way to go. If anyone's qualified to talk about making summer a runner's secret weapon, it is you. But smart summer running is complex. It's part endurance, part science, part discipline. So to make sure we cover all the angles, we've brought in a superstar lineup of experts today to help us talk about this.

00:04:42

Beccs Gentry: We absolutely have, and I am thrilled to listen to them all and learn from them myself. So first and foremost, we have Dr. Eamon Duffy who is a sports cardiologist at Columbia and NewYork-Presbyterian. Eamon is not only a distance runner himself though, he founded Columbia Runners Heart Clinic, which is a practice built entirely around the hearts of runners and endurance athletes from first timers to ultra marathons, everybody, which is just so fabulous.

Eamon spends his days helping runners train hard, chase PRs whilst keeping their hearts healthy and safe. So yes, lots of high-fives to that. We are also excited to mention today

though that Dr. Duffy is about to join the New York Road Runners Medical Advisory Council. So huge congratulations from the get-go today, Dr. Duffy.

00:05:30

Dr. Eamon Duffy: Thank you. Thank you.

00:05:32

Rob Simmelkjaer: Welcome to that panel. The Medical Advisory Group helps us on all things medical. So excited to have you join that, Dr. Duffy. Also joining us now, water obviously is a key part of running in general, especially in warm weather. Hydration is everything. And so we have Dr. Eric Roy joining us today. He is a water specialist, scientist I should say, who founded the water filtration company, Hydroviv. Did I pronounce that correctly? Okay.

He did that out of his Washington DC apartment by the way, in the wake of the Flint, Michigan water crisis, which we all remember. And they build filters custom-tuned to a city's specific contaminants. He pitched it on Shark Tank in 2019, caught Mark Cuban's eye. And in 2021, Hydroviv was acquired by Culligan, our official water partner, where Eric is now the head of science for consumer products.

Dr. Roy is here to give us the science of hydration, not just how much to drink but what actually should be in your bottle. Dr. Roy, thanks for joining us.

00:06:39

Dr. Eric Roy: Thanks for having me.

00:06:39

Becs Gentry: I have so many questions for you. So many questions, but I'm not going to delay in our third wonderful guest today. Rounding out our round table is someone we all know very well, our New York Road Runners' very own coach Ben Delaney. Ben is New York Road Runners' director of training programs, and he basically runs our entire coaching operation. He's there for the group training all over the city, Team for Kids, and that huge army of paces you see in the blue and white jerseys, getting tens of thousands of you listeners to your goal times at New York Road Runners races.

Ben is the perfect guest for someone like this one because he coaches by effort, not pace. And he's going to tell us all about how it really feels out there on the day-to-day.

00:07:33

Ben Delaney: Yeah, it can feel so tough, but thank you so much, Becs. I am so excited to be on this panel. Summer running is maybe not my favorite. I've talked to Rob in the

past about this. I'm a winter guy, but summer running is part of what we deal because hey, the TCS New York State Marathon is in November. If you're running it, this is the reality, but we have so much information. I just can't wait to dive into this and talk to everybody because we could all learn something.

00:07:53

Becs Gentry: We will.

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Dr. Eamon Duffy: Absolutely.

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Becs Gentry: We will. Dr. Roy, Dr. Duffy, Coach Ben, welcome. Let's get this rolling.

00:07:59

Dr. Eamon Duffy: Thank you.

00:07:59

Rob Simmelkjaer: Absolutely. So all right, we've all had bad summer runs and I wanted to ask each of you, I know you're all runners, to tell us about your worst summer run or workout, one where it says in our notes here, it's funny, one where you genuinely thought about stopping. In my case it's, or where you actually did stop, because I have definitely had those.

I remember last summer I just was supposed to do, I don't know, an eight or a nine mile, not a crazy long-ish run during my taper, I think. And I just stopped. I just couldn't keep going. The heat, the humidity was just brutal. So Coach Ben, since you've already told us how much you love running in hot weather, tell us about your worst summer run.

00:08:45

Ben Delaney: Wow, just coming out swinging for the fences, Rob, coming right at me. Yeah, Becs mentioned it before we got on the air, there's so many summer runs that you'd rather just forget, never remember. You want to put them out of your memory as quick as you can.

And the odd is, the one that came to mind to me was also a taper run. I think sometimes you get to that mode where you're just kind of tired, your body's in this weird space. And I think I was doing the final six or 10 miles of the TCS New York City Marathon course with some friends of mine. And I got to the Bronx and I was like, "No, I'm out. I'm done." And it was hard and it's a mental check and it's kind of a gut check and an ego bruise, but you learn from

it, you move on.

And that's the biggest thing I can take away is even on the tough days, you learn something. What was going on? What was happening? Bad days happen. There are no bad runs. You just got to learn from where you are. So you know what? I had a bad day. My marathon went great. That was the saving grace.

00:09:40

Becs Gentry: Love that.

00:09:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: How about you, Dr. Duffy?

00:09:44

Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah, I would say I'm taken back to a run last June. I was preparing for a marathon late June, and this was my last real workout, maybe three weeks out. I was doing, I think it was 12, like a three-mile warmup and then 12 at marathon pace and then a three-mile cool down. And I went outside and it was 6:00 AM, but it was already hot and humid. And I could tell it was going to be a rough morning, and it was brutal. I couldn't hold the marathon pace for more than six or seven miles once I started in that hard workout portion.

And you're stressing the whole time because you feel like you should be able to do marathon pace three weeks out. And you're deep in your head thinking you're already disappointed and the marathon's going to be a challenge, but couldn't hold it through the full 12, 13 miles. Kind of held up, slowed down, limped home the last three and was super bummed about it.

But in that setting, you have to remind yourself that when it's hot out there, your marathon pace, if that's what you're aiming for, your goal pace is going to be different. You cannot run the same paces at 80 degrees or even 70 degrees that you can run at 50 degrees. It's not comparable and you have to change your expectations and change your paces, honestly. When it gets warm, when it gets humid, my main takeaway for all of this is you have to slow down and you have to adjust what your expectations are and what your paces are.

So I think about that one a lot last June and it taught me a lot about how to approach running in hot temperatures.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. I want to get into more of the why, why the warm temperatures affect us the way they do, but we'll come back to that. What about you, Dr. Roy?

00:11:36

Dr. Eric Roy: As the others were going through their stories, I was kind of having some flashbacks. It was a few years ago I was just stacking up hours in prep for a 24- hour event, and I had just moved from the Northeast to Washington DC. This event was a 24- hour mountain bike race, but my shoes arrived before my bike did and I needed the hours. So I just laced up the shoes and took off out the door.

And I think everyone knows there's a pretty big difference between the Boston suburbs and Washington DC. And about four hours into that, when you're in that final stack and hours phase, you're building as much mental resiliency as fitness. So it's like, okay, not going to quit, not going to quit, not going to quit. And that was obviously the wrong thing to do in this case. And honestly, it set back my training about 11 days quantitatively.

So that's one of those where sometimes you just have to pull the parachute and turn back and be humbled a little bit. So that was my big takeaway from that. I'll never forget it. I cracked, had to take an Uber home. It was tough.

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Becs Gentry: I literally, as you're all talking, I'm like, why have I had so many?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Because you run so much. Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: True.

00:12:55

Rob Simmelkjaer: The more you run, the more bad days.

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Becs Gentry: ... pick one. There was so many from being so dehydrated. I hallucinated when I was running a relay race from LA to Vegas many, many, many years ago. But I thought the RV that I had gotten onto was a boat, and I thought the boat was spinning. Semi- cool, but also scary when you know what it's doing to your body.

But most recently, and this comes from being half a scatterbrain, half a tired working professional mom who was training for one of the toughest mountain races in the world. I was too busy getting my daughter to school and making sure she had her sunscreen, her water, her everything for school. And I was going to be driving T to school and then from New York, I was driving up to Beacon, New York. I got there, it was one of the first super hot days we

had. Maybe a month or so ago it was going to be over a hundred.

So I'm trying, but battling against traffic to get up there before midday. And I think I got there 10:30, 11:00. Got my pack all ready to go, reached in to grab my electrolytes to put into my water. Hadn't brought my electrolytes, had I? I packed everything for my daughter. And gels, they have electrolytes in these days, which was my only saving grace. And I had plenty of plain water, but I'm such a heavy sweater and I'm not anywhere near as qualified as you guys. But from the years I've run, I know that I need electrolytes when I run, especially on a day like that.

And guys, I tell you, I was halfway up the first hill and I think I stopped. I looked like I jumped in the reservoir that had just passed because I was drenched, my cheeks were red, and I was just panicking that I didn't have electrolytes because that's all I could think about. And I went up once, I think I did two laps when I was supposed to do five. And every time I would look around, I could feel my reactions were getting slower and tree branches were starting to look like what I thought were bears or deer or just something that was scaring me and rocks on the floor that weren't there.

And so I called it. I walked my way down for the second half of it because I didn't want to break my ankle. And I have never wrung my clothes out so heavily when I got down and went straight to buy some electrolytes knowing I had to drive home. But just thinking of what I'd lost and just putting that sports physiology and psychology together in the moment, I was like, oh God, this is a really bad place to be in, on a mountain by myself as a female, very dehydrated in a hundred and something degrees. I was like, let's go. Let's go.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Not a fun day. Not a good one. But again, you take on these crazy challenges so often that you're just bound to have days like that. But I'm glad you came out for that mountain okay, Becs. That's good.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We've got you here to chat with everybody. Absolutely. That's most important. Let's go to a little bit of talk about what people are going through right now. So for everyone who is looking at a fall marathon, Dr. Duffy, this is now the period where they are ramping or maybe already have ramped up, especially if they're doing one of

the earlier ones like Sydney or Berlin. Why is the race really kind of won or lost in these weeks and months, July, August, September, if you're running that late, not so much on race day?

00:16:34

Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah. I would say because heat is a form of stress for the body and one of the most effective forms of stress, and it's through enduring that stress that you build endurance. And it's that endurance that will carry you through on race day many months from now.

What heat does to the body is essentially your body has two competing priorities while you're running in heat. One, you're trying to run and two, you're trying to stay cool. And you run by pumping as much blood as you can and oxygen and nutrients to your muscles, your legs in particular, but also your diaphragm, which controls the lungs and your brain. And when it's cool out, your body's shunting all that blood towards the muscles and you feel great.

When it gets hot, there's this competing priority to cool down. And the way that the body cools down is through the skin and through sweating. And so the body shunts blood to the skin and you only have a finite amount of blood, plasma, et cetera. And so blood is shunted to the skin to cool down, and the blood therefore is not going to the legs to the same degree. So these competing mechanisms, and we prioritize cooling down. The systems in your body don't know you have a marathon six months from now. They're just trying to stay cool.

And so the blood's going to the skin to cool down. There's not as much in the legs to bring oxygen or to clear those waste products from exercise. We all know about lactate, et cetera. And so the way that your body compensates is by essentially working harder. Your heart rate starts to go up and that's how you feel it most of all.

But that's sort of the competing mechanisms that's going on. And through the summer months, you train those mechanisms. Heat is something that you can acclimate with time over days and weeks of running in the heat and your body gets better at it. And that is building strength, building endurance. And so the summer months are key for those big fall races. And as demoralizing as it can be, as long as you do it safely, running in the warm temperatures is a great stress to build endurance.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: So it's interesting. I mean that really tells me that as we go through these summers, and we all have our programs that our coaches have given us or our app is giving us, and maybe you're running five days a week and

you get that one day that's just crazy hot, crazy humid. The temptation for so many of us is to go indoors, get on a treadmill.

Now there are days where you just have to do that, right? But it sounds like if you can, what you're really saying is go out in those days and get some miles in because that's going to help your body get ready for whatever may come on marathon day.

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Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah. I think every runner is different, and a lot of it is your experience and knowing your body. I would say if you're more of a novice runner just getting into marathoning, just getting into longer distance running, you don't want to jump out on a 90-degree day and go do a hard workout necessarily. That's a day to be on the treadmill or to run early in the morning, late at night, find the shadier paths in Central Park. A lot of people do their workouts on the bridal path. There's just a little bit more shade. But in general, Central Park is so well-shaded.

For the more experienced runners, you've done a number of marathons, you are doing higher mileage. I think it's reasonable. It's all relative. 70, 80 degree day is fine. 90, 100, no matter what, you've got to be careful. And people talk about the dew point a little bit. I think we'll get into that. That's sort of a combination of temperature plus humidity, and that can be helpful.

It also depends on what marathon you're training for. If you're going for one of the warmer marathons, I haven't run Sydney, then you want to do more of that heat acclimation training. If you have a late fall winter marathon, maybe that's less of a priority.

So it's all about who the individual runner is. But for more novice runners, masters runners, then you want to be more careful. Yesterday I saw a 24-year-old guy just sprint by me up the hill. I was like, man, it'd be great to be 24 again and just be able to take off on a hot day. And he was really booking it, had his gels. We all wish we could still be there and that's just how it goes. And I'm happy for him as he sprints by, but that's not for everyone all the time.

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Becs Gentry: No. Oh, my gosh. Yeah, rewind sometimes. You touched on it there, but let's talk about that difference between hot, dry heat, not just hot, dry heat, but there's so many different types of hot heat. And obviously New York Road Runners, we are talking to predominantly a New York/ East Coast based audience who run with us. However, our listeners may be based everywhere.

So I think one of the most dangerous and un-talked about-- that's really good English, Rebecca-- under-discussed conversations here is about humidity and dew points because it's great to see numbers, but what do they mean? Dr. Duffy, why is humidity so much more dangerous than just that hot temperature alone?

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Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah. Basically, humidity makes it so that way sweating is not as effective at cooling down your body is how I would sum it up. People think like, "Oh, I have so much sweat on me," that doesn't necessarily mean that you've effectively cooled down. The cooling takes place when the water that's on your skin evaporates off into the air. That is the process that you want to occur at all times while you're exercising.

When it becomes humid, the amount of water in the air is so great that it's not pulling the water off of your body at the same rate. It's all about that evaporation. That's the key. And so if it's humid, the water's not evaporating and it's the evaporation that pulls heat out of the skin, and in doing so cools you down and cools down the blood that's circulating just below the surface.

So that's why humidity can be so tough even at cooler temperatures because you can't sweat as efficiently as you do when the humidity is not there or if you live in parts of the country where it's not as big of an issue. But in New York City, the Northeast, certainly down in DC, I've spent a few summers down there, brutal. And so you can be tricked because it might be in the 70s, 80s. But if it's humid, that's as tough as running in the 90s on a dry day.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. And that's a really good point to make that it doesn't necessarily have to be hot out, dangerously hot out for the humidity to get you. Yeah, I've definitely experienced one or two of those.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Dr. Duffy, staying on this a little, we all have days that are hard and then there's a line. There's a line where hard becomes dangerous. And I think about this all the time at New York Road Runners because I've had the experience of going into our medical tents at half marathons and marathons and seeing what happens when unfortunately someone goes over the line.

You see people who are dunked in tubs of ice water to get their core temperature down. I've seen people come into those tents with temperatures of 107, 108, kind of scary and have to be literally dunked in ice to be cooled back down and

more serious problems have occurred from there as well.

So what's that line and how can a runner know the line? What are the things, the signs, the data even in the middle of a run that a runner can look at and say, "All right, I need to back off"?

00:25:30

Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah, I would say the heart rate is a key. I bring up heart rate a little bit. I have sort of split feelings about it, and it's hard to say that as a cardiologist. But on the one hand, I tell runners don't focus on your heart rate too much over the summer. It's going to be higher. There's no point in stressing about it. Let your heart rate do what it's going to do through the summer. You want to dial in your heart rate in September, October leading into these marathons.

That being said, if your heart rate's super high, the heart rate is kind of the odometer in a car when the RPMs are rising. So if it's super high, that's your body saying, "Hey, you're working really hard right now." And the human body can't sustain those really high efforts for a really long period of time. At the highest heart rates, it's like 30 minutes for most people.

So I'd say heart rate, maybe. Don't track it too hard during the summer. I'd say any new feelings while you're running, as weird as that sounds, we've all been there. I think back to a marathon I had a few years ago where I was running, and it was just like I haven't really felt this bad before, that's a bad sign. If you're really feeling beat up, tired, and it's not usually the legs, it's like the whole body experiences it. It's your whole body rejecting what's going on.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Sounds like the 2025 Bank of America Chicago Marathon for this guy.

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Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. For me, it was New York maybe three or four years ago, really hot day. Brutal. Brutal. The other piece of advice I would give is people talk about a lot about PRs and getting their best times. You're not going to PR during the summer for the most part in these hot days. You're not going to PR on a hot day a lot of the times.

And then big picture things, if you're feeling dizzy, as a cardiologist, chest discomfort, obviously that's very rare. But those sorts of symptoms, if you feel lightheaded, things like that, slow down. Stop running, rest, end the run for the day if you have any of those sorts of symptoms.

The line is going to be different. There's not one thing and everyone's trying to push that line and that's how you train and build endurance. But certainly there's a point at which point it becomes unsafe. And your heart rate's one way, but your body will tell you. Your body will absolutely tell you that, "Hey, this is too hard."

Whether it's lactate building up, that's what's going on at the cellular level. But at the big picture level, your body's going to tell you that you're pushing it too hard and you just have to listen to your body. And that's what I love so much about taking care of runners is that they're very in tune with their bodies. And that's part of learning to become an experienced runner. You know what feels normal, what feels abnormal.

And when you start having those, whether it's GI discomfort or just fatigue, things like that, you can feel it. Everything's hurting. Your body's telling you to slow down. Don't try to push through that. You will not be able to. There is no, "Oh, I feel horrible now, but if I just keep running at this pace, it's going to go away." And that's not a thing really.

Truly elite runners, professionals, you hear about like, "Oh, I felt bad and then I kind of ran through it and I got used to it," at that level, maybe. But for the vast majority of people, if you're feeling bad, it's only going to get worse. It doesn't really get much better. You can hydrate, slow down and feel better that way, but it's not going to feel better just by continuing at this same pace because your body is telling you, "Hey, I can't tolerate this for long periods of time."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's funny, you mentioned the elites. And Becs, you can relate to this. Even the elites can only push through so much. And you see elites, Becs, you know this. They actually have a higher DNF rate, a lot of them than your normal runners do. Because they're like, "Wait a second. I've got to run at the incredible elite pace I've got to run at to do this. And it's not happening for me. I am not feeling this."

Yeah, they could pull off and run a much slower time than normal, but a lot of them are just like, "I can't do this today. I'm out." And they just drop out. You see it all the time.

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Becs Gentry: They're so in tune with their bodies as well. They're so in tune with their bodies. They know the second it starts to feel, like Dr. Duffy said, just everything is rejecting this workout. I'm not going to bother pushing my

body any further because it's going to be to my detriment for days and days and days thereafter. So quit while you're ahead.

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Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah, exactly.

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Becs Gentry: But I love what you said. Sometimes you can just hydrate, slow down, and that brings us onto a very wonderful segue to get to the nitty-gritty about hydration. And we are going to lean on Dr. Roy here. I mean, honestly, I'm just going to have to sidebar with you for about an hour after this show because I have so many water questions. I am such a water snob and I love this. I love this.

Okay. So taste. Water taste. I will not drink New York tap water. Weirdly, everyone says, "Oh my God, it's so wonderful." I'm like, "You guys are just messed up."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Best tap water in the world right here in New York City.

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Becs Gentry: No, it's disgusting. It's disgusting. It tastes like iron.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We used to call it Eau de Bloomberg back in the day. Now I guess we have to call it Eau de Mamdani. But yes, it's New York's finest.

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Becs Gentry: Eau de yuck. And I do personally feel like taste is a big driver on whether people actually drink full stop or drink enough. So let's talk about that. Is there a risk in assuming that if water tastes fine, it is fine? But then talk to us about the properties of water and what it needs to be fine.

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Dr. Eric Roy: Well, yeah. Okay. So great question. Taste is a call-out. It's a huge thing to worry about, especially for athletes. Because as you called out before, if the water doesn't taste right, you're not going to consume it. And if that blows up a training session, that's not good. And if that blows up your race day, that's even worse. So that is a huge thing that we focus on.

But one of the things that a lot of people don't really think about is what about the things that have no taste? So

if you look at water quality, the contaminants that aren't great for you, so like lead, forever chemicals, arsenic, things like that, those chemicals don't have any taste in the water.

And when you look at runners and athletes in general, we're consuming multiples of the amount of water that the normal person does. And remembering that the toxicology limits that go into regulations and things like that are based off normal usage. So that's how we think about the water that we drink every day, especially as athletes.

On the taste side, it's just going back to the athlete. If you're not consuming water during the race or on your training run, it's not going to go well for you. We all know that. I just remember multiple races where I was surprised by the taste of the water at the venue. I didn't come with my own. And I was coming from rural Maine at the time where I was coming off of well. So chlorine was not something that I had in my water. It's just how it is.

So I remember very vividly it was going to a race down in Massachusetts and city water is what was on the aid stations and it was a self-supported race. So you were drinking from the venue and I just remember my consumption was low and I cracked. And it was one of those, it was too short of a race for me to back off and recover.

So when you think about taste, it's both everyday life. But as athletes, especially on race day, that's the thing where you don't want to be surprised on race day.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I've been there. I've run events as well where yeah, the water taste just surprised and disgusted me in a couple cases and that's not a good place to be.

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Dr. Eric Roy: It's not a good place to be.

00:34:08

Rob Simmelkjaer: Because now you got to force yourself to drink this water. You don't want to. You probably end up switching more to sports drinks in that situation, which we'll get to. Maybe that's okay, but maybe it's a thing you can control or test for if it's a race that you're allowed to bring your own water.

So Dr. Roy, what are your thoughts about bringing your own water into a race? Do you recommend that? Does it depend?

00:34:32

Dr. Eric Roy: I personally recommend on controlling the controllables on race day. I was someone that responded poorly to surprises, so I liked my own water in my own

bottles and things like that. There were races that we had where we had a sponsor that was making the water very neutral and something that didn't taste bad, and that was a welcome treat obviously. So that was something that was a good thing, but I'm a big fan of just controlling those controllables on race day.

00:35:07

Becs Gentry: Let's talk about tap water really. And I mean, I get it, whatever. Maybe it's just my filter at home that's terrible. I don't have a filter, my tap. But what is one of the key things that you have found over your years of study that people are missing in their at-home drinking water?

00:35:33

Dr. Eric Roy: Oh, it's this belief that if your water tastes good, it's good to go. And again, you go back to those priority contaminants like lead. I mean, we all talked a little bit earlier in the intro about Flint. Lead is something that is very detrimental to health, especially for children, and there's no taste to it. You don't know.

And the thing that's difficult about lead is lead doesn't come from the source water itself. It comes from your home's plumbing. So if you have an older home with older plumbing, that's how lead actually enters the water. So that is a huge misconception whenever we're talking to people about water quality.

The other ones are the types of contaminants that can pollute a water supply. Those are things you're starting to see it more in the news now, but things like microplastics and PFAS, sometimes those are referred to as forever chemicals. Those are things that have no taste as well.

And then there's a third bucket of contaminants that are things that are naturally found in nature. These are things like arsenic. Arsenic doesn't generally come from contaminated tap water, from pollution or anything like that, it comes from the geology.

All of those things, none of them have any taste and people, they start to get some complacency when it comes to it. They use their tongue as the only sensor, the only detection mechanism. And it's one of those things where when they finally do get their water tested, they're surprised by the results. So that's not a great thing.

00:37:09

Rob Simmelkjaer: So Dr. Roy, we're talking to an audience right now that is probably planning on consuming a lot of water over the next few months as they train for fall races. They're in all kinds of different places with all

kinds of different water systems in their communities. What's your one-size-fits-all recommendation to people when it comes to what water to drink, not knowing where they're coming? Should they all get their water tested? Should they all be drinking bottled water during their training blocks?

00:37:39

Dr. Eric Roy: Sure. So I guess the one-size-fits-all knowledge I would give, and I realize it's a cop out, is understand what's in your water. So if you're on a city, the city will provide data for you on that. If you're on a private well, you are responsible for both testing and treating your water. So understanding what's in your water is the first thing. That's step one.

Step two is understanding like, "Okay, I'm noticing these problems with my water. Maybe the contaminants aren't found at illegal levels, but maybe they're at non-optimal levels. They're above the health-only targets but they're still legal to drink." Those are instances where a lot of people are taking a step and actually getting a product to filter the water in their home. And in order to do that, you need to know what you're protecting against. So step one is understanding what's in your water.

00:38:28

Becs Gentry: It's kind of crazy. My mind is now in that level of conspiracy in a weird way of like, we're not going to go into that right now at all. But you live in a city and yes, the city has to give you the numbers of what's in your water, but at the same time, is it right? And coupling that with, as you said, old buildings. New York is full of old buildings. I live in Brooklyn. There are all of these old townhouses that are crumbly walls and yes, the pipes are terrible. But we don't do much about it. We just get our water filters and we use those and keep our fingers crossed that it's doing the right thing.

When it comes to, let's say, enhancing the water that you have at home, you're doing your very best, what do you think about putting things like those electrolyte powders in to help boost what you've got at home?

00:39:30

Dr. Eric Roy: Oh, those can be great things as athletes. We understand ourselves a lot. I think a couple of us have talked about how we sweat a lot. And when you're thinking about those types of things, I always leaned on my coach and my doctor to help me figure out exactly what electrolytes and what kind of balance I needed in my water.

So I am a huge advocate of that, but it's so individualized in my experience that I don't want to give

general guidance here on that. That's something that you really want to work with your coach. And if you're working with a performance doctor, that's a great conversation to have to make sure that you're getting the electrolytes you need.

00:40:08

Becs Gentry: Yeah. But it doesn't delete potentially bad water. You know what I'm saying? It can help to a physical element per your doctor physician's guidelines. But yeah, you still need to do your own research as you say, understand where your water's coming from and then couple it-

00:40:28

Dr. Eric Roy: There's the things you want in your water, which are the electrolytes and the things you don't want in your water. The product that you have in your home, that's going to delete the things that you don't want in your water. And then you can add back the things that are going to get you to your optimal performance level.

00:40:44

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:40:45

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. And let's maybe talk a bit more about electrolytes and actually may go back to Dr. Duffy for this. We talked about the role that sweating plays and humidity and how that makes it less effective. Let's talk about, we all know sweat is salty. For some, more salty than others, but those are the electrolytes that are leaving your body, the sodium that's coming out as you sweat.

So let's talk about the importance of replacing that sodium and of course some of the consequences that can come from not doing that, which we've seen tragically in some endurance events.

00:41:23

Dr. Eamon Duffy: Yeah, I would say just like Dr. Roy mentioned, it's individualized for each person and it's hard to give broad guidance about electrolytes. But I would say during the summer months, don't hesitate to put those electrolyte gels or the supplements into the water because you do know you're going to be losing a lot more of it. The way that the body pulls water out in some ways is like water and salt travel together. They pull one another out onto the skin and so you're losing salt. And salt also helps keep the circulating blood volume within the vasculature to some degree and keeps it moving in the right direction towards those muscles. And so you want to have enough salt

circulating to help do that.

So I would say it's hard to know how much each person needs. A lot of it is kind of trial and error. People sometimes come to me saying, "Hey, I want to do a sweat test, salt test," all that sort of stuff. And I say, "We can do those things, but really it's trial and error." And that's part of the fun of being an endurance athlete and the chess that goes into all of this is let's try some electrolytes this weekend on your long run. See if you feel better. Oh, I do feel better. All right, let's keep it going.

That's all it is. There's no magic formula that we plug in. It's just trying different things and some people need more electrolytes than others. And if it benefits you, you feel better, keep going, keeping in mind that on those hotter days you're going to be losing more salt. And everybody should be taking in those electrolyte tabs, which have really become much more accessible and people are more aware of it, that it's not just necessarily water that you should be taking in but electrolytes with it.

And New York Road Runners does such a great job of providing a lot of this stuff on race day at the sessions. It's not just water. There's Gatorade there. I forget if it's Gatorade, but there are sports drinks at a lot of them. The gels now combine, it's not just carbs, but carbs plus sodium. If you're taking bicarb, which a lot of serious runners are now taking, the bicarb comes with a lot of sodium as well. So make sure you're factoring that in, that if you're taking bicarb before a race, and again, this is experienced runners, you're getting a big sodium load to start.

So just know what's in, as Dr. Roy said, all of the supplements you're taking. Read the labels, plug them into ChatGPT, whatever it is that you use and educate yourself. And that's part of the fun. This is all meant to be enjoyable learning experience, and you're kind of altering the gears in your body to optimize performance. And electrolytes are a key part of that.

00:44:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: I'd love to say that I planned to be drinking from a Maurten water bottle during this podcast, but it just happened to be the one nearest my desk here. So I just grabbed it. But yes, we do provide a lot. It is Gatorade as well as Maurten Gel. And yeah, it's a key. So I think that trial and error is the right answer. And you do that during your training block, during your summer. You get to know what works, what doesn't work.

Dr. Roy, anything else you want to add in terms of what people should be looking for maybe when they look at some

of these salt tabs and other products that provide some of the sodium that's needed?

00:45:01

Dr. Eric Roy: Yeah, it's the sodium and it's the minerals. So just making sure it's high quality. And the big thing is just palatability. That's been my experience both as a scientist and as an athlete as well is if it doesn't taste good, you're going to look for excuses not to consume it. And we all know where that leads. And like Dr. Duffy said, it is about experimentation.

00:45:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. Well, let's transition to maybe the hardest part of this entire summer running thing, the actual running and the training that we all have to go through in these blocks. Coach Ben Delaney, let's start with I guess the philosophy that we use at New York Road Runners on our group training runs and in our long runs with Team for Kids and all the places where we are training runners, which is training by effort and not by pace.

And I will tell you that when I first started running with you guys in group training, it took me a while to get my head around that because I think about a pace. I'm like, "Well, wait a second. We're going to run here today. What pace is this group running? You got to be running... What should I be doing? Should I be doing seven, eight, nine-minute miles?" And you guys always bring it back to the effort level.

What does that mean in practice and why?

00:46:27

Ben Delaney: Yeah, it is kind of an interesting concept to think about and to wrap your head around does take time. And the simplest thing that I use as a coach when someone comes to me, I say, "You use the talk test. Can you talk and how much can you talk while you're doing the effort?"

Dr. Duffy touched on it earlier when you saw a 24-year-old running up the hill doing certain things. Now everyone is going to be in a different space when they're there, and maybe you're a better summer runner or a better winter runner. So it goes down to each individualized.

But when we look at effort-based, I use a talk test. And when we look at a marathon training plan, when 80 to 85% of your running should be at what we consider a conversational pace, you should be able to not quite do exactly what we're doing here, but you should be able to have a conversation to a certain extent for the bulk of your training. It's those other 15, 20% where yeah, you got to work harder and you're going to do that.

So I tell people when you first start, just how much can you talk? And I always make the joke, it's New York. Talk to yourself. Nobody will think differently. It's okay. It's New York. We all talk to ourselves here. But really you do that.

I was actually running with somebody with Team for Kids this past weekend. They had come to our first workouts, or they actually came to their first. We'd been running for a while and they were not really sure. And I went up to them, I tried to have a conversation and they could not. So I knew immediately that they were working way too hard for what they wanted to be at.

And they were like, "Well, my heart rate says this." I'm like, "Yeah, but I'm asking you how you're doing." And you're saying, "I'm doing fine." I'm like, "We should be at a conversational long run pace today. This should not be tough."

So I simply backed them off of the pace that they were running. We went from, I think we're like a high nine to a mid-10 to a high 10, and all of a sudden, bam, they were much more comfortable and they were able to sustain the effort.

I say effort, not the pace because Dr. Duffy touched on earlier, we get wrapped up in our paces and everything. And it's like, yeah, we know what we want to do at our marathon, but right now in the summertime, it's a reset. It's a mental reset to say, hold on, I know what I want to do. But if I can put in the effort, I'm going to make the physical and physiological gains that are going to help me down the road.

But I also have to remember I may have a run tomorrow. I may have a run in two days. I've got other speed work. I may only be in the first four weeks of a 16-week training plan. And you want to get to the start line healthy. You want to get to the start line ready to run the race that you trained for.

And if you over-train and it's so easy to overtrain and overwork and make up miles and do all the wrong things, that if you just do too much too early and don't focus on the things and your body is telling you something, you just have to listen to it. And when you do, then you begin to reset, readjust, and then it's like, okay, now I get this.

And that's really what we preach in New York Road Runners training is, hey, look, you're putting in the work, but don't put in so much work that you're setting yourself back for later on in your training because you want to feel as good as you do in July, as tough as it can be. When you get to September, October, you still want to have other gears to go with and to be able to do what you need to, to then get to the taper, to get to the start line in Staten Island, to then run the best 26.2 miles the world's ever

seen.

00:49:32

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Agreed. I love the effort, not pace. I think that's a huge message for everyone running, not just in summer I think throughout the year. I think we definitely are so, so distracted by the numerical side of running, how far, how fast, how often that we forget, okay, the vast majority of us are not professional athletes. We are doing it as a hobby.

And as Dr. Duffy said, it's supposed to be fun. Your hobbies are supposed to be something that fills you with joy and happiness and not something that you dread and makes you feel really bad about yourself and lack confidence over. So I like that effort. Yeah, can I chat with my friends? Can I use this as a social hour, my long run? Perfect. That's what it's supposed to be.

00:50:28

Rob Simmelkjaer: The effort level also can make sense that it's variable. I guess that's one of the things that makes it great for summer running is your 60% effort may be one pace when it's 60 degrees and it's going to be a very different pace when it's 80 degrees.

00:50:45

Ben Delaney: And Dr. Duffy talked about earlier, humidity is a huge factor in that. I mean, 2025 United Airlines NYC Half, the first time we crossed the Brooklyn Bridge, we had a cool day, but man, it was foggy and we had humidity. And people were like, whoa. And we come out of a winter training cycle into what technically would've been the warmest, but the most humid day that we had.

So all of a sudden, if your half-marathon effort is a seven or seven and a half, on a scale of one to 10, that's going to feel really hard because all of a sudden I've come out of this winter training when it's been in the 20s or 30s, maybe the 40-degree mark. All of sudden I hit a mid-40 to a low 50, but 90% humidity. Now I'm running at a tank top in shorts, not long sleeves, jackets, gloves, hats, and I'm sweating profusely.

And maybe I haven't done the things like Dr. Roy said, haven't done the hydration stuff during the winter months because I may not be sweating as much, so I don't have to drink as much water. False, big false right there, everybody. You still have to drink even when it's cold, you have to be hydrated all the time.

I remember a lot of runners, I paced a two-hour group for that race and there were runners that were really struggling. We got to the 15K mark as you come off the FDR past the

UN, up in the Times Square where you should be having all the energy, that 5K race in you, and runners really struggled. So humidity is such a factor in that. And so as we talk about rate of perceived exertion, the RPE, think about it from one to 10, five being your mid-range, level four to five should be your comfortable long run pace. Level six, we sometimes put that around that marathon effort. Seven, seven and a half, okay, now we're in the half-marathon effort range. Eight, 10K, 5K, eight and a half. Nine's your mile. 10 is an all-out sprint for all of us who want to be Usain Bolt, out in the world or any of our sprinters out there.

But that's how you can kind of look at that, but it is variable based on time of year. And again, it's how you look at it. And we talked about heart rate earlier. If we're using a wrist rate, it may not be as accurate as you think. The chest strap is going to be your most accurate piece of information you're going to get, but so many things will factor into heart rate-- coffee, lack of sleep, if you have kids. I have a 21-year-old, love the kid to death, but sometimes he makes me want to pull my hair out what's left of it.

But it's all the factors of life will impact your heart rate. So again, if we talk about the effort level, how much can you talk, when can you talk, and at different points of your workout. Hey, it all feels good at mile one. Let's be a hundred percent honest. But if I'm in a two-hour run or a 10-mile run, whatever I may be doing, am I still feeling as comfortable or as good at mile eight or nine or 90 or so minutes into my run? That should be a good telling factor of how hard you have worked because remember, it's not one run that's going to make your race. It's the volume of work that's going to prepare you for your start line.

00:53:34

Becs Gentry: Yeah, I love that. I love that. Oh my gosh, have so much information here to digest and to take away. As we said, I don't know. I'm not a meteorologist, but it feels like we're not even halfway through summer here in New York right now. But we have already had so many days where just walking the dog around the block has felt like a 10-mile run on some days.

So hopefully our listeners have taken your advice, your words of wisdom, and a lot of words of experience here too with them. But we're going to ask you one more thing before we say goodbye to each of you. After when this ends, when we're through into autumn, when the summer training has completed itself, what is the one thing a runner should trust about their fitness when the weather finally breaks? I'll start with you, Ben, as the resident coach.

00:54:37

Ben Delaney: Right. And I will say trust in the work that you have done, even though maybe your runs have really been tougher than you think, or maybe you've never hit the marathon pace and you're like, "There is no way if I can't hold it for five miles or 10 miles, how am I going to hold it for 26.2?" You have to trust that you've still made the physical, the physiological, and the mental gains over your training.

There may be some expectation adjustment or maybe some slight adjustments for other things. However, if you just trust in the work that you've done and put the effort in and the time in, you've prepared yourself for the race that you've trained for. And that's the biggest thing. That's the best thing and what we all want to be able to do.

00:55:12

Becs Gentry: Love that. All right, Dr. Roy.

00:55:15

Dr. Eric Roy: Big thing is enjoy it. Like Ben said, you've put in all the time. You've trained yourself to do the things that are just going to come automatically to you once the weather breaks. So just enjoy that season. I always did.

00:55:32

Becs Gentry: Yes, absolutely. And finally, Dr. Duffy.

00:55:36

Dr. Eamon Duffy: I would say keep hydrating. I think myself and a lot of the runners I work with under-hydrate. They don't drink enough water throughout the week leading up to that big run. Maybe in the summer months when it's hot, you're drinking more water and then it cools down and you sort of deprioritize it a little bit and think maybe I don't need that two liters a day now that it's cooler out. You still need that water. Just because you don't feel the sweat on you doesn't mean that your body doesn't need to cool down.

And so I would say hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. There's a big focus right now on high carbs and gels and all of that stuff, but water is really the key to a lot of this. So hydrate, hydrate, hydrate even into the fall, cooler months, and you'll really reap the rewards of all of the hard work you put in throughout the summer.

00:56:31

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right.

00:56:33

Becs Gentry: Wonderful. Thank you.

00:56:34

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you all so much. Becs is right. We could talk about this all day. We've talked about it in other podcasts as well, so there's a lot of information out there. But thanks to each of you for joining us, lending a little bit of wisdom as our runners fight through the summer months to get ready for fall. If that's what they're doing, trying to run a fall marathon. Dr. Eamon Duffy, Dr. Eric Roy, and our very own Ben Delaney, thanks all very much.

00:57:02

Becs Gentry: Peloton has got something for whatever running mood you're in. Try instructor-led runs and walks that are built to fit into your routine with classes that help you stay consistent, build speed, and be in the moment. Track your metrics, see your progress, and train smarter. We've got it all to help you reach your goals and stay on track. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner of New York Road Runners.

Well, that does it for another episode of Set the Pace. Thank you so much to today's guests, Dr. Eric Roy, Dr. Eamon Duffy, and our very own coach, Ben Delaney. If you like this episode, please go ahead, subscribe, rate, or leave a comment for the show on whatever platform you're listening on. This not only helps us, but it helps others find out about the show too. In the meantime, stay safe out there, stay hydrated and run strong, my friends.

We'll see you soon.